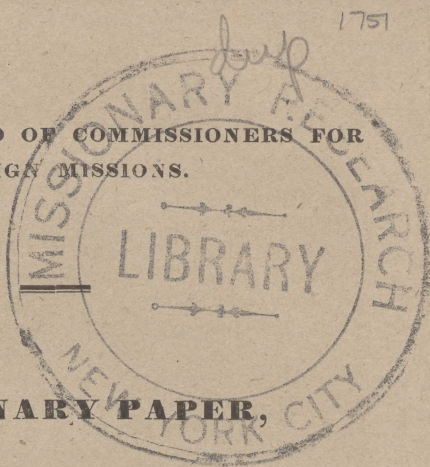


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AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR
FOREIGN MISSIONS.



MISSIONARY PAPER,

NO. XIV.

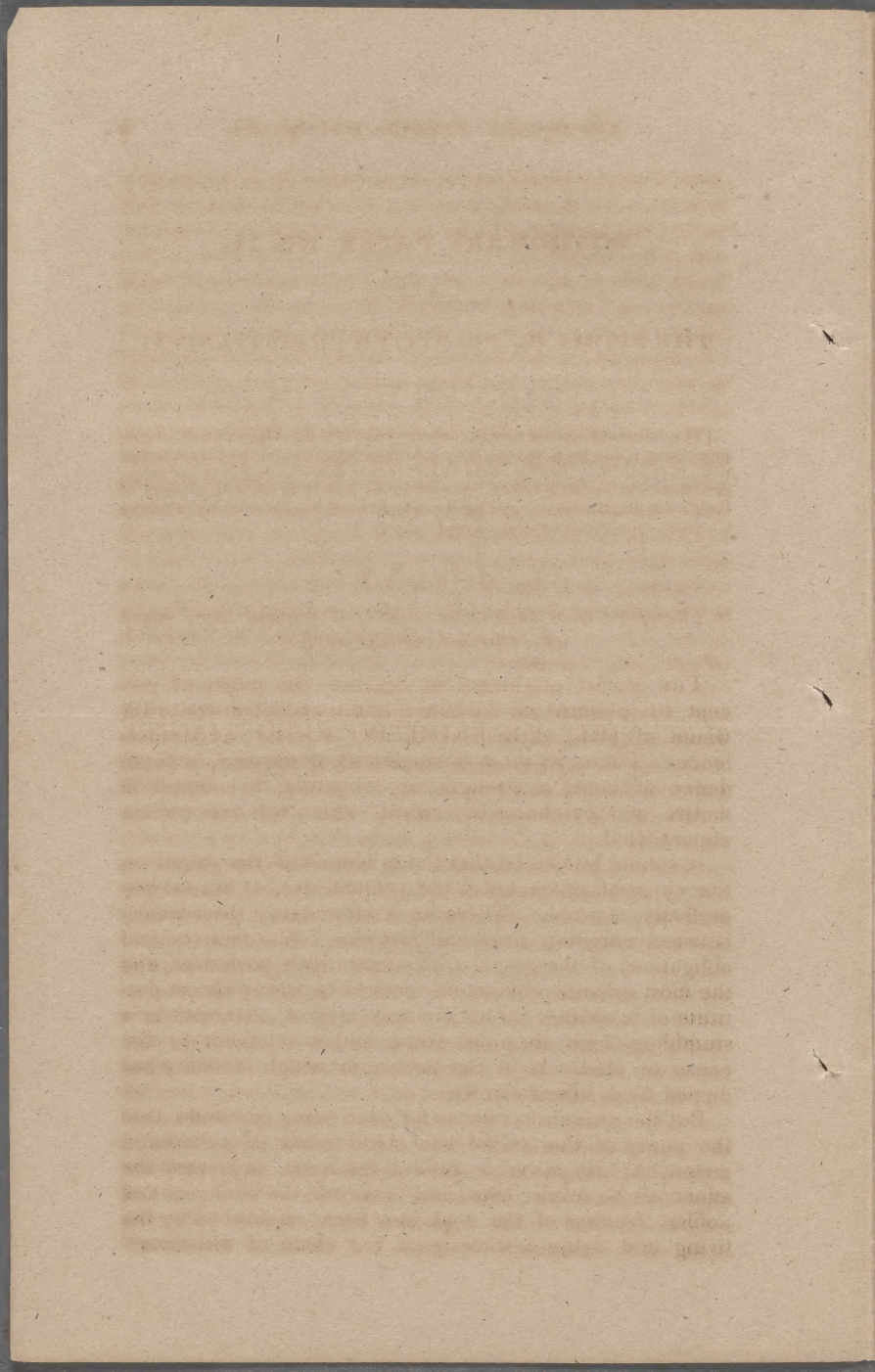
THE SPIRIT OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

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MISSIONARY PAPER, NO. 14.

THE SPIRIT OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

[The following sermon was preached by the late Rev. SAMUEL MUNSON, missionary of the Board to the Indian Archipelago, just before his embarkation, June, 1833. His short missionary career was a more full exemplification, than has, perhaps, before occurred in the history of modern missions, of the privations, hardships, and perils, which were encountered by primitive Christian missionaries and martyrs.]

ACTS viii. 4.

"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."

THE gospel originated in heaven. Its purity of precept, its sublimity of doctrines, and its adaptedness to the wants of man, all bespeak infinite wisdom and benevolence. There is in it a singleness of purpose, a confidence of hope, a strength of obligation, a compass of motive, and a richness of reward, which will ever remain unparalleled.

It cannot be denied that the influence of the gospel on the christian character at the present day, is but too imperfectly marked. There is a lamentable discrepancy between christian *faith* and *practice*. The motives and obligations of the gospel are comparatively powerless, and the most solemn professions seem to be words almost destitute of meaning. This inconsistency of character is a stumbling-block to unbelievers, and a reproach to the cause of God. It is the poison in which infidelity has dipped its deadliest arrows.

But the church has cause for everlasting gratitude, that the power of the gospel has been tested in a thousand instances. Its power to reform the heart, to elevate the affections, to inspire hope, and to control the strongest and noblest feelings of the soul has been established by the living and dying testimony of a "cloud of witnesses."

The disciples of Christ have proved beyond controversy, that the *love* of God is the strongest passion that ever took possession of the human bosom. In proof of these statements, I make my appeal to *facts*. What was it that influenced primitive Christians "to go every where preaching the word?" What was that living, thrilling principle within them, which, like the visions of the prophet, seemed to be a "fire shut up in the bones?" What inspired them with fortitude to preach the word in season and out of season—in weariness and painfulness—in hunger and thirst—in cold and nakedness? What armed them with courage to stand up in defence of the truth before governors and kings, when they were despised and hated of all men on account of it? What enabled them to receive with cheerfulness the "spoiling of their goods," and the loss of reputation,—to meet with composure the tortures of the rack, the gloom of a dungeon, and the fires of the stake? The answer is simple. It was the *power of the gospel*.

What moved Stephen to bear witness to the truth at the expense of his life? What constrained Paul, amidst the sorest trials, to journey and preach the word through the Roman empire? What stirred his masterly spirit as he stood on Mars Hill and witnessed the idolatries of Athens? What moved him to go up to Jerusalem when he was assured that bonds, imprisonment, and death awaited him? The answer is perfectly plain. It was the *power of the gospel*. It was the spirit of the gospel renovating and commanding the strongest feelings of the heart, moving all the moral sensibility, and resolving every motive, desire, and purpose into *one*, viz. the glory of God and the salvation of man.

The Holy Spirit descended on the apostles and the churches planted by them, and inspired them with invincible fortitude to go wherever misery existed and human happiness could be promoted; and prompted them to put forth a series of efforts, such as the world had never before witnessed.

This spirit, which was a plant of celestial origin, could survive, while the church was active in her appropriate work; it could flourish when she was trodden down beneath the fiercest persecution; but it withered before her listless inactivity. Though it has slumbered for ages,

some faint glimmerings of the same heavenly disposition are to be seen in the zealous, systematic efforts of benevolence at the present day. True its name is different; but its nature is unchanged. It possesses the same all-inspiring energies as it did 1800 years ago. If it could then hurry the devoted martyr to the place of execution, it will now constrain a man to forsake all for Christ; to encounter hardships and privations; and amidst the most appalling discouragements to hold on with untiring courage until death.

Let a man be under the influence of this spirit, and wherever he may be stationed, whether abroad or at home, he will feel a resistless impulse within, constraining him to *act*. He will feel compelled to adopt the broad maxim, "what *ought* to be done *can* be done,"—he will "attempt great things, and expect great things."

In the prosecution of this subject, I propose to give a brief outline of the obstacles encountered; the labors and sufferings endured; and the success of primitive Christians in preaching the word.

I. The opposition encountered by primitive Christians in preaching the word.

One of the most prominent sources of opposition which I shall mention, was *Paganism*.

Nearly all the nations among whom the apostles and their immediate successors preached the gospel were subjects of the Roman empire; and with the Romans paganism was the established religion. What paganism might have been in the early stages of its existence, I know not; but it had been so modified by the corrupt inclinations of men, as exactly to correspond to the feelings of the unrenewed heart. Not a passion could rankle in the human bosom, but that some were found to patronize it.—Not a crime could be committed, even of the blackest character, but that some divinity had before been guilty of the same.

Those who trembled at the sanctions of paganism could purchase indulgence with sacrifice; and those who did not, could give loose reins to passion without fear of retribution. Its ceremonies were interwoven with the most flagitious practices. The drunkard, the glutton, and the prostitute alike found a sanctuary for crime within its consecrated temples.

Considered as a whole, it was a system of the basest accommodation. No adequate conception of the opposition which such a system would exert to the spread of the gospel, can be formed from paganism as it exists at the present day. It is now a cripple, tottering with the infirmities of age; it was then a giant, armed with the vigor of meridian manhood. It was not merely an alliance of "church and state," but an actual incorporation of paganism into the civil constitution. There was, therefore, the jealousy of civil rulers, the fierce opposition of pagan priests, the contempt of philosophers to whom the gospel paid no deference, the superstitious attachment of the common people to the religion of their fathers, and the criminal passions of men, to which the gospel would give no license,—all united in one solid phalanx to bid defiance to the efforts of the christian missionary. To overthrow such a system, upheld as it was by prejudices, passions, and worldly interests, and introduce in its stead the stern and unyielding doctrines of the gospel, and that too, in the face of an enemy whose prohibitions were sanctioned by death, was an enterprise of no ordinary hazard.

Jewish infidelity was another serious obstacle to the progress of Christianity. By revealing a resurrection, the gospel incurred the hatred of the sceptical Sadducee. By enjoining humility as a practical precept, it roused the indignation of the sanctimonious Pharisee. By placing all nations on a level, it wounded the pride of the apostate Jew, and disturbed his idle dreams of national aggrandizement. Christianity had, therefore, nothing to expect from them, but the most settled opposition. Accordingly every exertion put forth by Christ and his apostles for eleven years, to purify the Jewish church, and to avert the national calamities that threatened, was rewarded in full measure with stripes, imprisonment, and death.

Justin Martyr informs us that they actually sent out an antichristian mission into all the surrounding nations, declaring that an atheistical heresy had been excited by Jesus, a Galilean impostor, whom they had crucified, but that his disciples stole him by night from the tomb, and deceived mankind with the fiction, that he had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven. So true was it that they would neither enter the kingdom of heaven themselves, nor suffer those who were entering to go in.

Such were some of the obstacles amidst which the early propagators of Christianity went forth to announce to the world the glad tidings of salvation.

II. *The second point to which I would direct your attention is, The zeal of primitive Christians in preaching the word.*

It is much to be regretted that the first century furnished no faithful historian to record the labors and triumphs of the church. For at least a hundred years, during the most interesting struggle of Christianity with paganism, the history of the church, as it respects her internal operations, is buried in oblivion. The few fragments that remain give but an imperfect idea of the form and power of primitive godliness, as it was then exhibited in the lives of its professors. To gather the true spirit of Christianity, as it then existed, from what it appears to be at the present day, would be to learn the splendors of the sun from the glimmerings of a taper. Primitive Christians labored and prayed and preached the word from the overflowings of a full heart. They planned and executed with the promptness and sincerity of dying men. They evinced by their conduct that their souls were roused up to an enterprise of daring, in the execution of which all sacrifices, whether of property, reputation, or life, dwindled into insignificance.

One distinguishing trait in the character of primitive Christians was, *Their indifference to the luxuries of life.*— Says a Christian Father, and I doubt not he spoke the sentiments of the whole church, “Will not a table contain our food unless its legs be ivory? Certain it is that a lamp made by a potter will give light as well as if it were the work of a silversmith.

“Our blessed Lord ate *his* food from a common dish. He sat upon the ground and washed his disciples’ feet without a silver basin. Nay, he quenched his thirst from the earthen pitcher of a poor Samaritan; and are we better than he? Is this part of his example of no binding obligation? Could he wander about, not having where to lay his head, and cannot we live without a splendid mansion and costly furniture?”

Says another, “The believer who is satisfied with the supply of his necessary wants, lives little less than the life.

of angels; for while he is contented with little, he imitates their want of nothing."

"We are commanded," he continues, "to pray for our daily *bread*—not for riches and delicacies—not for splendid garments and golden ornaments—not for silken carpets and great possessions; but for *bread*," in other words for the common necessities of life. This habitual temperance did not result from frequent and urgent calls for means to spread the gospel; but from enlightened views of christian duty. The injunctions of holy writ, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," "Let not a man be greedy of filthy lucre," "Let women adorn themselves in modest apparel," they understood *literally*. They felt that such precepts imposed a binding obligation on every conscience.

Another trait of character no less conspicuous than that already mentioned was, *Their readiness to suffer in defense of the truth.*

This point can best be illustrated by *facts*. The public meetings of the church at Edessa were prohibited on pain of death, by a royal edict. Disregarding the prohibition, they continued to assemble as usual. When the governor was ordered to go with his guards and execute the threat, on his way, he was overtaken by a woman hurrying forward with the utmost expedition. He inquired where she was going? She replied, 'To the assembly of the Christians.' 'But did you not know that they are devoted to immediate death?' 'I well know it,' she replied, 'and I was hurrying thither lest I should be too late!'

We are told of forty Christians at Sabastia, in Armenia, who were condemned by the governor to be exposed naked to the frosts of winter. Before the execution of the sentence he attempted to bribe them to deny Christ, by the offer of immense fortunes. But they calmly told him that he had laid his snares at the wrong door for them; that he could not bestow what he attempted to take away. While suffering under their extreme tortures, they cheered each other by balancing their present pains with their future hopes. "Is the frost cold and bitter," said they, "the rest that remaineth is sweet and pleasant. Let us hold out a little longer and Abraham's bosom will refresh us. We shall exchange this one night of suffering for an

eternal age of happiness. 'Tis but the *flesh* that suffers, let us not spare it, let us die that we may live."

Christians of both sexes, and of all ages, from the child who could only say, "I am a Christian," to the man of gray hairs, went cheerfully to the stake and sealed their testimony with their blood.

It was their constant intercourse with heaven, their sterling piety, that sustained them in these appalling moments of suffering and trial.

Says one, "they continually kept company with dying thoughts, and lived within prospect of eternity."

"They well knew that the more haste their enemies made to break open the prisons of their bodies, the sooner would their redeemed spirits be at liberty to mount upward to regions of blessedness and immortality." So ready were they to bear public testimony to the truth and excellency of their religion, that they wearied the patience and sated the vengeance of their persecutors. Hear the confession of a heathen magistrate on this point. Says the president of Palestine, in his relation to the Roman emperor of his proceedings against the Christians, "I am quite tired out in punishing and destroying the Galileans; and yet they cease not to offer themselves to be slain. Nay, though I have labored both by promises and threatenings to make them conceal themselves from being known as Christians, yet I cannot save them from death. For when interrogated, they will still answer, 'I am a Christian.'"

When Antonius, proconsul of Asia, had commenced a furious persecution, the Christians collected in one vast body and presented themselves at his tribunal, and so confused was the wretched man, when he heard them freely confess Christ, and calmly submit themselves to the executioner, that he ceased from his infernal purpose of extermination.

With hopes full of immortality, how could they deny their Master? What were tortures and death, when all heaven invited them and waited their approach?

How could they deny *him* who had purchased them with his own blood? How dare they deny *him*, when the terrible denunciation was ringing in their ears, "Who-soever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven."

Says Tertullian, in his apology addressed to the Roman

emperor, "We say we are Christians; and we say it to the whole world under the hand of the executioner. In the midst of all the tortures you can heap upon us, to make us recant, torn and mangled and covered with our own blood, we still cry out as loud as we are able, 'We are Christians.' Let your tormenting irons tear our flesh, your gibbets exalt us, and your fire lick up our blood, a Christian on his knees in prayer to God is in a posture of defense against all the evils you can heap upon him.

"Call us what names you please, fill our flesh with faggots to set us on fire; yet let me tell you, that when we are thus begirt and dressed about with fire, we are in our most illustrious apparel. These are our victorious palms and robes of glory; and mounted on our funeral pile, we feel ourselves as in a triumphal chariot. We conquer when we die; and the spoils of that victory is eternal life.—Go on, therefore, and do your worst. Rack your inventions in torturing Christians; it is all to no purpose. Every device of your inhuman policy does but promote our religion. The faster you throw us down, the thicker we shall rise. The Christian blood, which you pour out like water, is like seed sown upon the earth; it brings forth a hundred fold. What you reproach in us as stubbornness, is the best means of proselyting the world. For who has not been struck at the sight of our fortitude; and from thence pushed on to look into the reason of it? And whoever looked well into our religion but that embraced it? and whoever embraced it, but that was willing to die for it?"

Such was the challenge of a Christian Father living in daily expectation of martyrdom.

A graphic description of the scenes of a persecution and of the indignities suffered by the Christians, may be found in an epistle from the churches at Lyons and Vienna, in Gaul, addressed to their brethren in Asia.

"The grand enemy," say they, "assaulted us with all his might. Christians were absolutely prohibited from appearing in any house except their own, in baths, in the market, or in any public place. But the grace of God fought for us, preserving the weak and exposing the strong, who like pillars were able to withstand them in patience. The first trial was from the people at large; threats, blows, the dragging of their bodies, the plundering of their goods, and all the indignities which could be offered by a fierce

and outrageous multitude. The martyrs being apprehended and brought before the tribunal, discharged their part with all alacrity of mind, while they sustained tortures which exceed the power of description. The whole fury of the multitude, the governor, and soldiers was spent in a particular manner on Sanctus our deacon, and on Maturus, a late convert indeed, but a magnanimous wrestler in spiritual things; and on Attalus a man who had ever been a pillar and supporter of our church; and lastly on Blandina, of whom even her enemies confessed that no woman had ever suffered so much.

"Some young persons, whose bodies had not been exercised with suffering, unequal to the severity of the confinement, died.

"Pothinus, the bishop, upwards of ninety years of age, and very infirm, yet strong in spirit, and panting after martyrdom, was dragged before the tribunal, treated with the greatest indignity, and thrown into prison, where after two days he expired."

The same letter informs us that the bodies of the martyrs, after being exposed for six days, were reduced to ashes, and scattered by the heathen into the Rhone, that they might prevent their resurrection, and thus destroy in others the hope of a future life. But blessed be God, they could not destroy that hope, which like a ministering angel hovered over the expiring martyr in his departing moments. The pratings of philosophy could not drown the voice of that faith which discovered to him visions of approaching glory, and caused him to exclaim from the scaffold and the stake, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Thousands thus perished, whose names are buried in oblivion. No stone marks the place of their repose; no epitaph tells the story of their sufferings. Yet their names and their deeds are registered in heaven; and they will be known in the day of final accounts.

In the persecution under *Domitian*, which happened about A. D. 94, it is believed that not less than 40,000 perished by the most excruciating tortures. And let it here be remembered that these were the choicest sons and daughters of the church, singled out by their peculiar zeal and activity as the fittest victims of popular fury.

Yet before the close of the *first* century converts were gathered in out of almost every nation in the known world;

and churches were planted from Hindoostan to Gaul. The stated means of grace were established, and an army of missionaries were raised up, who were waging an exterminating war against the criminal passions of men and the abominations of idolatry.

In the tenth persecution which took place under Dioclesian, when God in his wise providence had heated the furnace seven fold, the church was reduced to the last extremity. By an edict of the emperor, the heathen magistrates, like so many hungry wolves, were let loose upon the defenceless lambs. The scene that ensued no tongue can describe. Some were pent up in their own houses and perished beneath their ruins. Others were buried, drowned in the sea, burned at the stake, or in a red hot iron chair. Others were hung up by the feet over a slow fire; they were crucified, beheaded, sawn asunder. No less than 17,000 perished in a single month. In Egypt alone, 150,000 suffered martyrdom; beside 700,000 others who came to their end in banishment, or at the public works.

The streets were literally wet with the blood of the Galileans, while every city, town, and hamlet rung with the shouts of persecuting pagans, and the songs and acclamations of expiring Christians. "From torturing pains to endless joys, on fiery wheels they rode."

Yet this sacrifice of a million of her chosen sons,—this awful havoc, at which humanity shudders and the heart sickens and turns away in horror, was just at the dawn of the brightest morning the church ever saw. It was the rising of a glorious sun, which nothing but her own criminal delinquency could ever obscure. If we would see Christianity in all its glory, we have only to contemplate a primitive disciple in the character of a Christian philanthropist.

We are accustomed to call that age blessed, which produces *one* such man as Howard or Brainerd. But in the age we now contemplate, every man who bore the Christian name possessed the philanthropy of a Howard, united to the piety of a Brainerd.

When the grand enterprise required the sacrifice of all that was dear, whether of property, reputation, or life, that requisition was promptly and manfully answered.

Their divine Master had before established this high

standard of action both by precept and example. He it was who taught them to esteem all the sacrifices they could make as far inferior to the promotion of his kingdom, as the interests of time are beneath those of eternity.

On this high and noble principle did they habitually act. Though they went forth like sheep in the midst of wolves, yet they possessed a magnanimity and elevation of soul that raised them far above the fear of personal danger or personal suffering. I would not say that their minds were always strained up to this pitch of intensity. No, they were *men*; and as such, they were liable to be subjected to misgivings and disappointment. Doubtless there were seasons when they longed to finish their work and be away. When persecuted and troubled on every side, and hunted by violence from the abodes of men, no wonder if they looked wishfully towards that better country, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." Yet, their lives corresponded with their high profession. They knew no other standard of effort or sacrifice than that established by their divine Redeemer. They fixed their eye habitually on the highest standard by which human actions can be governed. They were consequently "a city set on a hill"—a great light hung up in mid-heaven.

III. *Thirdly, the success of primitive Christians in preaching the word.*

On this point, time will permit me to remark but briefly. —About the beginning of the second century, Pliny, governor of Bithynia, assures the emperor that Christians had become so numerous in his province as to call for serious and well devised measures for their suppression. Justin, forty years after, informs us that converts had been gathered in by the apostles and their successors out of every nation in the known world.

Tertullian, who wrote at the commencement of the third century, says the common cry was, "The city, town, and country are overrun with Christians."

Addressing himself to the heathen rulers, he says, "Your cities, towns, camps, and assemblies all swarm with Christians; and if we should but remove from your empire, you would be struck dumb at the general silence as if the world had departed." Following the church

down 100 years further, and calamitous as the event proved, we find her actually putting on the royal purple, and sitting down on the throne. We find that gigantic power, that would long before have blotted out her very name from the earth, had not God been her helper, now arrayed to demolish the kingdom of darkness. Heathen temples were every where leveled to the ground; their idols were cast out and trampled under foot, and an army of pagan priests who had been active in persecuting the Christians, now stripped of their honors and emoluments, and dispersed or sent into banishment.

Splendid Christian temples were erected, and every office was filled by a professed follower of Christ.

Thus in 300 years, did the disciples of Christ preach the gospel throughout the 120,000,000 embraced within the Roman empire. Yes, to their honor, and to the glory of infinite grace, let it be said that a handful of disciples under God, disarmed and subjugated a nation that had conquered the world!

The application of this subject is easy. From the brief view that has been given, it is not difficult to see how primitive Christians understood the precepts of the gospel. To renounce the world and embrace the Saviour, was to give up *all* for him. It was nothing less, than a literal and entire devotedness of time, talents, property, reputation, and life to the promotion of his kingdom. In this surrender there could be *no reserve*. Had they said, "We can give up our property to be confiscated,—we can bear reproach or pine in a dungeon; but we are unwilling to lay down our lives,"—How would such a profession have been considered by the church? How would the Lord Jesus have looked on it? Not as obedience, but rebellion; not as fidelity, but the basest treachery. But if such were the requirements of the gospel eighteen hundred years ago, are they not the same at the present day? If so, are not the men of this generation under obligations to put forth as vigorous efforts, and make as great sacrifices in spreading the gospel, as did primitive Christians? Surely there are no intimations that the terms of discipleship have been changed. If Jesus Christ once exacted this of his followers he will require it of them down to the end of time. But hear the terms of discipleship from the

Saviour's own mouth. Says he, to his early followers, and through them to all succeeding generations, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, brethren and sisters, yea, and *his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*" But what is the meaning of this unequivocal declaration? It is plainly that a man must love Christ and his cause, more than every other object, or all other objects put together; and he must manifest that by his *actions, or he cannot be Christ's disciple.* Take now this standard and go through the church of God, trying every professed Christian, and how many true disciples will be found? Where are the men who evince by their conduct such strong attachment to Christ and his cause? Where is that zeal, that devotedness, and that energy of Christian character, which were once the crown and beauty of the church? The fact is well known, that at least 20,000,000 of heathen annually close up their earthly career, and pass on to their final account, cheered by no brighter prospects than that of entering upon a miserable eternity. From year to year does this tide of desolation roll on, with scarce a single barrier to stay its fearful progress. If any are convinced of the folly of heathenism, they know of no city of refuge, they have heard of no ark of safety. They can only stretch out their hands and implore the bread of life, with all the importunity which the direst necessities can inspire.

But what are the followers of Christ doing to answer these large demands upon their sympathies and efforts? Are they standing with their loins girded up, holding themselves, their talents, and their property at the disposal of their Master? Do they feel their personal responsibility? Are they willing to make any sacrifice, even of life itself, that can promote the salvation of men? In short, are they living up to the primitive standard of self-denial? Perhaps it will be said that the conversion of the world does not now require such sacrifices as were made by the early propagators of Christianity. This may be true; yet it is equally certain that an amount of labor and sacrifice is required in the conversion of the nations, to which the church is manifestly unwilling to submit. Are the few hundreds that have been sent to the heathen, all that can be spared from her ranks? Is the work of evangelizing the nations moving onward with all possible rapidity? Is

this all that Jesus Christ has reason to expect? Is it all that primitive zeal and devotedness would accomplish with the wealth, the numbers, and the talents of the American churches? But I will not push these inquiries.

The value of the undying soul, and the obligations which Christianity imposes, are the same now as they were 1800 years ago.

Impelled by a sense of duty, primitive Christians could search out every corner of the Roman empire, they could penetrate into India—into the land of our fathers, and among the barbarous nations of the east;—they could spare no labor and no sufferings in scattering the bread of life among their fellow men, while *we*, heirs of the same promises and bound by the same obligations, hoping at last to sit down with *them* in the kingdom of our common Father,—can calmly remain in our own beloved native land, and hear the Macedonian cry without emotion. *They* could sacrifice their all, and count it but dross, if they could be the means of saving a soul, while the utmost stretch of *our* benevolence is measured by a few dollars. And whence this amazing difference?

Such is the progress of our efforts, that it will require a thousand years to do what primitive zeal would enable us to accomplish in a hundred.

Yet the opinion is prevalent in the church, especially among those who are putting scarcely a finger to the work, that the millennium cannot be far distant, while they seem to feel wholly unconscious that they have any part to act in achieving this grand revolution.

But are they not expecting more than facts will warrant? Is not that a dead faith which is not followed by corresponding effort?

The truth is, the church are expecting more than primitive success, while they are falling infinitely below the primitive standard of action. They are “expecting great things,” while they are not “attempting great things,” and are doing comparatively nothing.

It is true that the church is not called to brave the fires of persecution; but she is called by the providence of God, and the command of her Saviour to accomplish a work scarcely less extensive or difficult than that assigned to primitive believers.

Their manners and institutions need not be adopted, but more of their spirit she must have, or she is undone !

NOTE.

REV. SAMUEL MUNSON, the author of the foregoing appeal, accompanied by the REV. HENRY LYMAN and their wives, embarked at Boston, June 10th, 1833, for Batavia. These brethren expected to remain at Batavia such a length of time as might be necessary for the purpose of preparing themselves most advantageously for exploring the islands of the Indian Archipelago, especially the Malayan group; which, in accordance with their own inclinations, they were instructed to make their first object of missionary labor. The end to be accomplished was to obtain and present to the Christian community more full and definite information respecting this large and almost wholly neglected portion of the heathen world; and also to ascertain where there were important posts which might be occupied by other missionaries, who might afterwards be sent into that quarter of the world. They arrived at Batavia on the 30th of the following September, where they remained till April of the next year, when they commenced their travels, going first to Padang, on the southwest coast of Sumatra, where they arrived on the 26th. Early in May they proceeded to the Batoo group of islands, exploring Niyas and some others; and thence reached Tapanooly, a town of Sumatra, about half way from Padang to the northern point of the island. After remaining at Tapanooly about a week, making inquiries respecting the Battas, (who occupy the interior of the island, north of that place,) and preparing for their journey, they departed on the 23d of June. Having travelled on foot five days, across mountains and ravines, and a country very sparsely inhabited, they came to a log fort, and before they could have time to make known their character or object, they were surrounded by two hundred armed Battas, who rushed upon them and soon shot Mr. Lyman with a musket, and thrust Mr. Munson through with a spear. One of the attendants also was killed. The others fled and reached Tapanooly, and made report of the distressing event.

Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles gives the following account of the Battas—

“The Battas are an extensive and populous nation, occupying the whole of that part of the island lying between Acheen and Menangkabu, [embracing nearly half the island,] reaching to both the shores. The coast is but thinly inhabited, but in the interior the people are said to be ‘as thick as the leaves of the forest;’ perhaps the whole nation may amount to between one and two millions of souls. They have a regular government, deliberative assemblies, and are great orators; nearly the whole of them

write, and they possess a language and a written character peculiar to themselves. In their language and terms, as well as in some of their laws and usages, the influence of Hindooism may be traced; but they have also a religion peculiar to themselves; they acknowledge the one and only great God, under the title of Dibata Assi Assi. They are warlike, extremely fair and honorable in all their dealings, most deliberate in all their proceedings; their country is highly cultivated, and crimes are few."

With these indications of civil and intellectual improvement, the Battas, according to the same author, exhibit some of the worst characteristics of unmitigated barbarism. They are cannibals—even the laws of their country enjoin it upon them, in the case of four crimes at least, to devour the flesh of the criminals, and to dispose of prisoners taken in important wars, in the same manner. The law does not permit them to wait till they have put a period to the life of the victim. This, however, is said to be seldom, if ever done to gratify private malice or revenge; and in the case of criminals, the awful punishment is never inflicted until after a regular trial has been held, evidence produced, and the sentence publicly pronounced by the constituted authorities. It is said that the people prefer human flesh to any other; and that formerly this savage practice was much more prevalent than now, so that the lives of nearly all the old people were terminated in this manner. Sir Stamford Raffles, in 1820, estimated the number of persons annually eaten, in time of peace, at from sixty to one hundred. He still speaks of the people as being honest and honorable, and as possessing many virtues.

Messrs. Burton and Evans, missionaries of the English Baptist Society, settled in Sumatra in the year 1820, and the former took up his residence at Tapanooly, in the Batta country. They were afterwards reinforced by Mr. Ward, from the same society. He with Mr. Burton penetrated far into the interior, intending to reach lake Tobah, but this, owing to the sickness of one of their number, they did not accomplish.

Mr. Burton and his wife subsequently settled among the Battas, was well received, established schools, and the people seemed gladly to avail themselves of the means of instruction thus offered. After laboring some years he was cut off by disease. No missionary is known to have since gone among them.

Does not Christian enterprise demand that other missionaries should without delay follow in the steps of these brethren who laid down their lives for Christ's sake; and carry that gospel which is so powerful to enlighten, humanize, and purify the mind, to a people professing so many interesting traits of character, but deformed with so much barbarity and guilt?

